fimart

international review
of the advance-guard
cinema

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spring 1934
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international review of advance-guard cinema

film art

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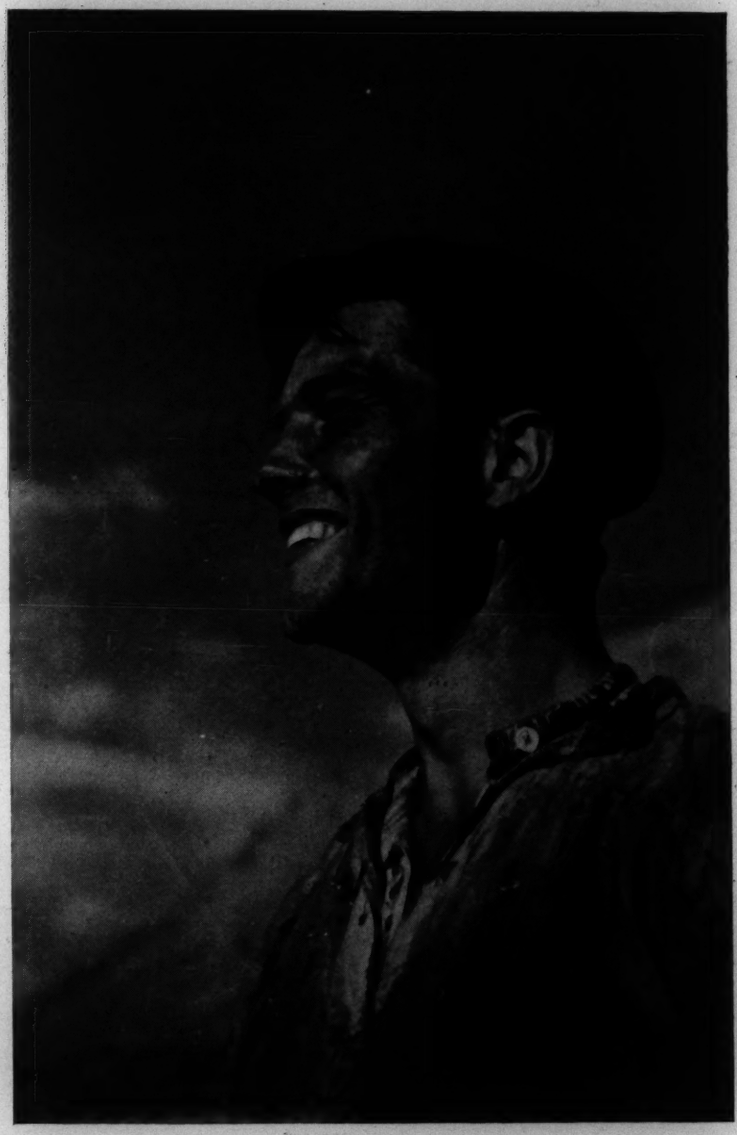

From " Ivan " ; a new soundfilm by A. Dovschenko.
De " Ivan " ; un nouveau film sonore de A. Dovshenko.
Aus " Ivan " ; ein neuer Tonfilm von A. Dovschenko.

film art

international
review of the advance-guard cinema

edited by
B. VIVIAN BRAUN

number three
new series
spring 1934

review-editor : IRENE NICHOLSON
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EDWARD ASHCROFT

film art

half a year of existence

by the

editor

half a year of film art

This " esoteric review of film purists "
This " high-strained product of ' montage ' enthusiasts "
This " outburst of intellectual confirmations on film ethics "
This " yellow-covered, thunder-typed manifesto of film theories "
This " modernist quick-firing periodical of ' lower case ' and higher ideals "
(the best we consider!)
This magazine
This ' review of the advance-guard cinema '
This periodical
This—*film art*—was the outcome of a two hour talk in a Chelsea café on the seventeenth of March 1933.
We were discussing (strange as it seems) films.
In particular the hopelessness of the film position from an artistic point of view. The present day film.
Commercialism gone mad.
And then we talked of the glories of independent cinema.
When the director is a creator, a poet, building up his material, and manifesting his ideals, and making a film that was—whatever else it might be—a creative effort.
And we realised (probably a little late) that there was such a thing as a second film public. That there were people in England, continental Europe and America who were interested in film as art. A minority, certainly, but a minority of millions.
And then we decided (far too late) to do something about it.
All very nice—but what?
And very suddenly we thought—a magazine.
Not just ' a magazine ' but something more.
Something that would do more than talk.
Something that stood for ACTION.
AN INTERNATIONAL REVIEW THAT WOULD ACT AS A MANIFESTO TO THE ADVANCE-GUARD FILM MOVEMENTS OF THE WORLD.
Vital in its very aspect.
Always in contact with its readers. CONTACT. And co-operation. Two essentials.
And a review that could, if necessary, damn all commercialism and thus raise higher its own pedantic ideals.
We choose the name *film art* (*film* first), and that alone was a definite title.
The " art " probably frightened some people, but only those of the wrong kind.
We immediately laid down rules.

As non-political as possible, for example, but also that articles would be printed as received, except when space demanded cutting.
Another thing we made definite:
OUR DESIRE WOULD NOT BE TO DESTROY THE ORDINARY (SENSATION-LOVING) PUBLIC BUT TO CREATE A NEW ONE.
We said (with no little pride) ' *film art* will appear on July the first '.
We had little idea as to where the funds were coming from.
' Number one *film art* on July the first ' we repeated.
The days before that first number went to print are almost indescribable.
They were nightmares of pleasure, shocks, thrills, disappointments, hopes, worries, and work.
On the fifth of July the first number went to print.
Four days later we were sprawling over yards of proofs.
Number one *film art* appeared on the twenty-first of July 1933.
The Charing Cross Road shops had advance copies. We stood at their windows looking with admiration at black-on-yellow covers displaying the name *film art*.
Two days later came the first repeat orders.
We thought we had won the world!
Came more orders, and more!
The 750 mark was passed in under three weeks.
We began planning.
An advance-guard cinema must be opened and advance-guard films must be made.
These are still in existence (I mean the plans).
But we meant to carry theory into practice.
We will, D.V.

The success of the first number, of the second number, of all numbers, is due to our excellent contributors, our review-editor, and our assistant editors. Robert Fairthorne, John C. Moore, Marie Seton, Edward Ashcroft, Irene Nicholson, Theodore Komisarjevsky, Andrew Buchanan, and one or two others deserve special thanks for their invaluable assistance on that never-to-be-forgotten (from our point of view) first number.
Number one went well, true, but the production cost and the expenses, distributing, postage, publicity, etc. were so high that it was not easy finding money for the second number. The second number was due before it had gone to print. And inquiries were coming in. Hopeful, but worrying. And the second number is the most devastating for any magazine.
Number two. *film art* 2.
By hook or by crook (latter) number two appeared.
On November the fifteenth.
film art TWO was published——and sold.
I had proposed outlining in detail the sensational (but not always agreeable) reception *film art* received, judged by the reviews in the press and the many letters received. The quotations at the beginning give a fair idea. The half-

year history of this review is a long one—too long for a detailed description. It is a story of praising and denouncing reviews, and of letters letters letters; letters of praise and otherwise, letters calling us " fluff-headed highbrows of Chelsea's backstreets ", and " Gods of cinematic art ", letters everlastingly repeating the joke about the small " f " in *film art* and the unconventional typography (this is no mannerism on our part but merely an aim at extreme clarity), letters saying that at last we were doing what they (the writers) had wanted to do all their lives, and letters confounding us for wasting our time and money on " a lot of high-sounding puff-talk ". And certain more enthusiastic readers visited the publishing office, sometimes—we suspect—to ' see what we looked like '. We hope their thoughts were realised. Anyhow they were invariably charming people always ending with the suggested " coffee down the road '. (One female seeing, we can only suppose, the name " film art " on the door insisted we must be manufacturers of a ' certain type ' of photograph, and, further, insisted on her suitability for such pictures!).

About the middle of November 1933 we received a telegram—unsigned—bearing the words: THUNDER OVER MEXICO—MUTILATION—ARRIVING WITH LESSER. We rushed to the printers and somehow managed to squeeze in a stop-press. And there were last-minute air-mail letters to contributors in France and Italy in order to include their articles and notes. Thus even a quarterly has its moments when speed is essential.

film art 3 IS, IN MANY WAYS, A NEW NUMBER ONE. It is the manifested culmination of a series of cross-sections which have hitherto marred us from complete self expression in every phase of the subject on which we deal. But now things are definite.

First let us take the film situation.

The things the (what we will call for want of a better name) artistic cinema are going to need are stimulance, encouragement and support.

Except on substandard (i.e. film smaller than that used in cinemas), films are too expensive to be made and never shown or shown at only one or two cinemas only. And even substandard is very expensive.

The new cinema public (for it is a *new* public; there will always be a large audience for sensational theatre-on-celluloid presentations of sex, murder, war, comedy, etc. just as in the book world the blood-and-thunder novel will always have its readers), must be collected, informed and guided in order that the genuinely good film may be supported. But good films (i.e. modern ones; one cannot re-issue for ever) are very scarce and therefore those making them need all possible encouragement and support. All this, and a lot more, we feel, is part of our job.

So, to end this lengthy *foreword* we return to ourselves, and an outline of exactly what we stand for, desire and propose to do. Even now some people are not definitely sure of our purpose. We, of *film art,* all realise that it has plenty of faults. That may be inevitable, but it will not stop our trying to correct them. And, contrary to certain people's ideas, *film art* does not exist so that " a lot of young film students may air their haughty opinions in

Pudovkin, himself, in a small part in his film " Deserter ".

Pudovkin, lui-même, dans un petit rôle dans son film " Le Deserteur ".

Pudovkin, selbst, in einer kleinen Rolle in seinem Film " Der Deserteur ".

" Man of Aran " by Robert Flaherty.

" L'homme d'Aran de Robert Flaherty.

" Der Mann aus Aran " von Robert Flaherty.

"Ivan"; A. Dovzhenko.

lengthy speeches and small type" (one day we shall regret ever having used small letters!). Nor is it meant to be an outburst of editorial and sub-editorial opinion. Is it inevitable that because we use unconventional methods and frequently mention form, ideals, art, etc., that we must be considered a lot of "affected highbrows"? We stand for sincerity, as much as, or even more than, anything else, and if that is not the impression *film art* has created in certain circles, then it is my fault for not stating more clearly our aims and desires.

film art exists

TO ANALYSE THE POTENTIALITIES AND SOLVE THE AESTHETIC PROBLEMS OF CINEMA ART.

TO SUPPORT ANY ARTISTIC FILM MOVEMENT, SOCIETY, GROUP, CLUB, CINEMA, OR INDIVIDUAL WHOSE AIMS ARE SIMILAR TO OUR OWN.

TO PRESENT THE WRITINGS, THEORIES, REVIEWS, AND OPINIONS OF BOTH WORLD-FAMOUS AND UNKNOWN PERSONS, AND TO PRESENT THEM EXACTLY AS STATED HOWEVER OUTSPOKEN OR REVOLUTIONARY.

TO ENCOURAGE THE USE OF THE CINEMA AS A SOCIAL REFORMER, AS A MEANS FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND FOR GENERAL EDUCATION.

These, briefly, are our aims and desires.

If we ever make a fortune we shall organise groups for making artistic films and organise cinemas for showing them.

Already our contributors include some of the greatest film directors in the world, and we soon hope to print articles by such directors as Dovzhenko, Turin, Vertov, etc.

We also propose to increase the number of pages and print many more illustrations as time goes on.

But to acquire influence we must increase our circulation.

And so may we ask our readers to join us in making *film art* known throughout the world, and known not only for what it is but also for what it hopes to accomplish, by introducing it to any and everyone who they think will be interested in this——"review of the advance-guard cinema".

B. Vivian Braun

February 1934

the difficult bride

S. M. EISENSTEIN

The movie is in a matrimonial mood.
" Lo the bridegroom cometh".
The writer, he comes to woo the movie.
The movie is quite prepared to throw herself into his embrace and give him everything she has.
To-day there is none too much.
But she expects all the more in return.
She is a difficult bride and hard to please.
She wants the bridegroom to give her a dowry.
To take count of this expected dowry is the purpose of my lines.
The writer must know what is expected of him.
Perhaps it will not hurt the cinematographists either to check up what they ought to expect of and demand from the writer.
Why do we need the writer? What for? What writers?
What are the characteristics and qualities of the writer? What sort of literary product does the cinema need? What is suitable and what not? And so on and so forth.
These questions must at least be touched upon if not dealt with thoroughly otherwise the talk about the writer in movie production will remain a pious wish.
Although the theatres are prone to boast of their preference for " live " authors, they feel very much more comfortable if that author is Shakespeare, Sheridan, or Schiller. A dead author gives so much less trouble.
So I too—in order not to perturb the goats in the literary field—will take the classics to illustrate what I have got to say.
And as we and the writers have in general been to school with the same eternally live dead (not to speak of the school of life and, of course, the " school for slander ") we shall understand each other perfectly on this point.
Thus what do we want the writer for? Firstly, secondly, and thirdly.
Can I let her have supper in bed with her lover after love? That would be the most convenient: they could quarrel about the crumbs getting between the sheets.—Good heavens, no—cries Seard—that isn't done with high-class courtesans. You can hardly imagine the degree of affectation and the foppishness prevalent among them.
You had better see for yourself.—
De Jourvenel quotes this conversation between Seard and Zola on the eve of writing " Nana ". Later we see Zola, short-sighted, embarrassed, pince-nez on nose, in kid gloves which make his fingers swell, in evening dress which suffocates the stooping figure of the man. He is very much at a loss in the unwonted environment of a night of debauch in the house of Lucie Levi, one of the leading demi-mondaines of the Paris of the Second Empire.

Dinner is served. The ladies put their diamonds in the soup to " flavour it ".
Zola feels dizzy.

At four o'clock in the morning Seard goes to hunt up Zola. He looks for him in all the rooms and finds him at last in the dressing room of the courtesan. She is reclining on the divan half-dressed. Her foot rests on Zola's knee. Zola has opened his note-book and on the other knee he carefully notes an exact description of the proper way to make-up. These descriptions have come down to us. This one was intended for " Nana ".

The same kind of detailed description of the descent into a mine was made for " Germinal ".

" Illustration " in an old issue of the nineties shows Zola side by side with a stoker on an engine on the Paris-Havre line. This was for " La bête humaine ".

Archives of notes and observations, many volumes, on all subjects. Fantastic, hyperbolic, grotesque.

The "supplement" shows Zola in the Rue de Rivoli under the wheels of a rushing cabriolet "in order to study the emotions prevalent in such a situation for the new novel " Paris ".

Compare this with the mountains of bric-a-brac, antique rubbish in Flaubert's study. " These fools will even collect things," he chuckles, meaning Bouvard and Pecuchet and giving his mummy a shaking with his foot.

To the horror of his publisher he wanted to append to this novel a full dictionary of human folly during the whole history of mankind—grouped in alphabetical order.

All this based upon the material supplied by the accumulation of facts for his two fictitious heroes.

On the other hand, the biographers of Balzac describe an entirely different method of approach.

In his period of maturity and creation of his greatest works, Balzac seems to give up the study of his environment. Where Zola needs acribious research, Balzac suddenly—" Magically " as Stefan Zweig has it—seizes it in its entity. The explanation lies, of course, in his " genius '. But Zola might have answered that genius is the " infinite capacity for taking pains ".

The matter is simpler—where Zola needs statistics, measures and card files, Balzac manages on his own lives, non-artificial experience. That is no gift of God, but an abundance of practical insight acquired in the course of his life, participating in the formation of his time. Balzac passes before our eyes in all the many-shaped aspects of his activities—Balzac as printer, Balzac as publisher, Balzac as financial promoter and Balzac as bankrupt. Balzac as lion in society and Balzac as snob, who inserts an usurpatory " de " into his commoner's surname. And he certainly would not begin to take notes in the drawing-rooms or in the twilight of dressing-rooms.

His store of personal experience is inexhaustible and thence his faculty for invention is inexhaustible too. On all the points he has enough to equip a whole crew of bright people.

Take the one method or the other. But a popular American text-book of picture-directing says that the fundamental and chief quality of a movie director must be " many-sided experience ".

Pushkin does it with verses and Moussorgsky with music.

Science gives us the experience of quick-flowing life in shorthand.
And that is about what we expect in the first place of the writer. We movie men read with envy how far Balzac or Zola (even by diverging methods) could penetrate life.
Chained like convicts to the specific conditions of cinematographic production, stationary in its essence though it may chase us all round the globe, we regard with still greater envy the contemporary writer. To him is given to enter, through the dust of archives, the depths of the centuries; he may fly on into the future and what is the most important, he may dive headlong into the present at any time and any place, into the boiling cauldron of socialist life-building that we call our social " to-day ".
But a note-book and a pencil are one thing.
And a million roubles quite another. Miles of film.
An army of chemists, lighters, administrative personnel.
Without them you cannot move, cannot experiment, cannot make mistakes, cannot get knowledge.
Thus periods of creative accumulation of penetration into reality or of its summing-up in one's own mind alternate with the overstepping of the expenditure estimates for our production.
The movie is heavy artillery with train loads of ammunition, while our colleagues of the pen are light cavalry.
And though our chains be but of celluloid, they do not break.
We are factories—while the writers are free Vikings or Christopher Columbuses discovering our to-day.
Paradox as it may seem, it is a fact that the most dynamic of all arts is the heaviest on the uptake.
Except where it is but a wandering of three fellows—we went through Mexico—stopping where we listed, letting the subject and the people grow upon us out of the very flow of life, in Yucatan or on the shores of the Pacific or the mountain tablelands of Central Mexico . . . .
But such months cannot be made to fit in with the planned activities of the movie factories.
The problem of the division of labour arises.
And that is where we need the help of the writers. We want their approach to the ant-heap of life, their assault on reality.
Their choice of the typical among all the variety of possible things.
We need condensers of meaningful vision.
We need collectors of what is socially visualised. We need the synthetised conglomeration representing a whole stratum of phenomena.
And that is what we expect the writer to give us.
But that is not enough. He must carry us away, set us on fire, so that we seize our cameras and rush to some dull spot on our boundless map that the writer with his eloquence has set aflame with the fire of life.
Geographical maps or pages of history.
To be possessed by our subject—that is what the writer must implant in us.
And this being possessed is certain to break through onto the film. Without it every enterprise remains a pale shadow hanging over the silver canvas of the screen.

Englished by Marie Seton.

From " Man of Aran ", Flaherty's film of the Aran islands which is noted in this number

De " L'homme d'Aran ", film de Flaherty des isles Aran, qu'on a parlé dans ce numéro.

Aus " Der Mann Aus Aran ", ein neuer Film von Flaherty über die Aran Inseln, über welchen wir in diesen Hefte herichten.

Filming " Komsomol " ; Joris Ivens, the Dutch director and H. P. J. Marshall.

On tourne " Komsomol " ; Joris Ivens, le directeur hollandais et H. P. J. Marshall.

Filmen " Komsomol " ; Joris Ivens, der höllandische Directeur und H. P. J. Marshall.

contemporary problems of the soviet cinema

MARIE SETON

1 *Scenarios*

During the early years of the Soviet cinema, the regisseurs found their material in recent events. The basis of their subject matter was the overthrow of the old regime,—dynamic destruction. But destruction without reconstruction ends in negation and that is in complete opposition to the Soviet system.

The whole idea behind Soviet art, is that it must develop parallel with the life of the country, that it must reflect life as it is now and not as it was even five years ago. Obviously it is easier to reflect the first days of destruction dynamically than it is the years of reconstruction. The one demanded passionate conviction and enormous effort, but the other needs an ever adapting comprehension of revolution. The one rests upon enthusiasm, the other upon staying power.

The Soviet cinema grew from the necessity to express the overwhelming and marvellous force of revolution. In power and technique it outstripped the cinema of every other country in less than five years, but to-day it is faced with enormous problems, for whereas the cinema of every other country can go round and round the same subject like a squirrel in a cage the Soviet cinema has to go ever forward and find new things to record.

To find the essence of contemporary life abroad and of Russia's changing life and to give them coherent form is the problem of every Soviet regisseur. Numbers in the last three years have failed, and the failure in nine cases out of ten has been the disorderly and shapeless form of the scenarios. Disorderliness in portraying a destructive force may be overlooked but in a film of constructive purpose it is disastrous. Numbers of recent Soviet films have been too long, too full of repetition and much too involved. Every regisseur has been severely reprimanded and a thousand storms have raged in every studio department.

It is clear that the scenario is an anaemic and troublesome child to the regisseurs who have taken up their pens and demanded that the cinema weds literature so that a stronger breed of scenarios can be born.

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a cinema art course

film art is pleased to announce that arrangements have been made for a correspondence course in film aesthetics. The course, which is open to anybody and which lasts (one term) 9 weeks has been based on a careful study of the formulated theories of S. M. Eisenstein, V. I. Pudovkin, etc., and exemplified by certain films. There are two classes. One for those with, and one for those without, cameras. For those without (substandard 16 mm.) cameras the scenario will be treated as fully as is possible but there will also be lectures on filming and montage. For those with (16 mm.) cameras, arrangements have been made by which students may send in certain definite examples of film conception, and have them fully criticised and, if desired, re-mounted wholly, or in part.

Application is, necessarily, limited and we ask those interested to write at once. A more detailed prospectus will be sent upon request. The inclusive cost of the (9 week) term is 3 gns.

Filming " Komsomol " ; Joris Ivens, the Dutch director and H. P. J. Marshall.

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idealism in cartoons

ROBERT FAIRTHORNE

Imagine a world in which the only pictures were photographs. In it there would be a habit of thought linking every picture with some actual object or event, for they would be vicarious windows opening on to the real world, and would imply the existence of their subject matter as much as a man's reflection implies the man. Doubtless some form of sympathetic magic would grow up, a belief that damage to the photograph involved damage to the original. Into this world introduce caricatures and cartoons. The effect would be as if a reflection refused to obey its owner, or as if a gramophone answered a question.

Such a world may seem impossible, but we tend to it in real life. Pictures are torn up or turned towards the wall for motives not always rational. In the cinema the approximation is even closer. Not only do the pictures show motion, but the connection of the film with photography, and photography with reality, is a part of the audience's everyday experience. Also the cinema, in its rivalry with the stage, has always done its best to strengthen the links between screen and reality by means of the star system. Even puppet and animated model films* have in some sort this linking with the actual. The models must have existed as such somewhere.

In cartoons no such background of reality exists, but habits of thought will give a temporary background of whatever brand of reality the cartoonist cares to supply. The screen becomes a window looking on to a world which, however fantastic, can be accepted for the time being. Provided always that the cartoon is consistent with its own lunatic logic. This is a rock which has wrecked many cartoons, whose worlds have been not merely impossible, but inconsequent. *Krazy Kat,* for instance, carries the visual punning of Sullivan's *Felix* to extreme lengths. The converse of this defect may itself be a defect. If the draughtsmanship is sufficiently good, the 'cartoonness' is lost, and the drawing degenerates into an inferior photograph. (e.g. the minuet in Disney's *Clock Store.*)

The consequence of this fundamental of film cartoons is that successful cartoonists have all, like their 'still' colleagues, portrayed worlds in which some feature of the actual world is highly idealized. *Mutt and Jeff* adventured through landscapes of extreme simplicity and neatness, dictated to some extent by technical exigencies. Functionalism was here carried to a just and perfect end. Even cannon balls out-ran the dreams of exterior ballistics. If badly aimed they chased their target as a dog chases a rabbit. There is an implicit rightness about this, as there is about much of Disney's work. Cannon balls ought to behave in this way. There is no space for an analysis

* Films with animated models are rare. *The Magic Clock* and the excellent series in the Kodascope 16mm. Library are well known. An ambitious effort by some French director was talked of in the early days of talking films, but nothing further seems to have come of it. Grierson's puppet series was frustrated by bad luck. Films like *The Lost World,* and *King Kong* are only animated model films when they fail to achieve their object of resembling reality. They may therefore be classed as such in spite of themselves.

of the various forms of idealism protrayed by different cartoonists, but it must be said that the way in which justice transcends Reason raises Disney's conceptions above the level of clever gags. For instance there is a superb rightness about the way in which piano and stool share the applause offered to the soloist.

One example of idealism, not overencumbered by considerations of artistic merit, deserves mention. This is the *Inkwell* series of Max Fleischer, remarkable mainly for technical ingenuity. If the common objection to mixed photographs and cartoons could be overcome, this series by its very nature satisfied a fundamental instinct. The striving after omnipotence, observable in children playing with dolls or torturing insects, received vicarious satisfaction on the screen. The artist created his world on the drawing board, scared his creations by drawing lions in their path, won their thanks by drawing cages in the nick of time, and generally made a nuisance of himself as an arbitrary and private Deity. Mild outbursts of Atheism, like stamping on the pen nib or upsetting the ink, were dealt with by abolishing the offender with the Divine Indiarubber. The artist's power over his creations was carried beyond reason, but not beyond justice. Fleischer gave a happy ending to the Pygmalion myth.

In another article it is hoped to examine other peculiarities of cartoons in general and in detail. Worthy of mention in a comparative study of the different styles of cartoonists are the visual punning in Sullivan's *Felix,* and the extreme suburbanomorphism and anthropomorphism of Disney, as exemplified by his mechanised nature study and his umbilical complex.

●

flaherty's "man of aran"

Watching parts of *Man of Aran,* for post-synchronisation (music, sound and minimum dialogue) proved that Robert Flaherty's story of the lives of the Aran Islanders contains much beautiful photography and some excellent cutting.

The film was started two years ago and made under ideal conditions. That is to say, financed by a large film company, and made independently by the director. For the best part of the two years Flaherty lived and worked among the islanders, and only when he knew them from the inside did he begin filming.

Flaherty is an outstanding example of an artist fighting cheap commercialism and winning in the end. Ever since he made *Nanook* and *Moana* Hollywood tried to get him, succeeded, but failed to have him prostitute his own art.

With *Man of Aran* he had the chance to do a great work or cinema and, judging by his previous independent films and the parts of *Man of Aran* I have seen, he will succeed.

"These Aran people are amazing," he said, "in a scene we were post-synchronising one of the women got so worked up she believed that what she saw on the screen was real, and she suddenly started singing some wild folk song, quite unconscious of the fact that she was in a sound studio."

Man of Aran will have its first showing in a few weeks.

B. V. B.

film review:

STATEMENT

There is general criticism, groping tentatively towards an absolute standard. There is application of this standard to a given work of art, and perhaps also general inductions to be found in the one. These should be the methods of any film review which is more than a signpost pointing where you should spend your shillings. It is the method we shall use in these pages.

But we know that many of our readers are not able to see the few films to which aesthetic criticism can be applied. For them we will do our best to discover those stray bits of art which are sometimes embedded in mediocrity. And we will mention the best in cutting, photography, acting etc. even when these are not concerned with art.

One word about film aesthetic. There can scarcely be too much talk about technique. But art is the creation of a unique and intuitive experience which is embodied in a definite form. This is composed inseparably of subject matter and technique. You draw a table. The same lines cannot be used for a chair. And the table itself changes its nature, becomes a different table producing a different experience, if the lines or their texture are changed. Therefore, unless the synthesis of subject matter and technique is incomplete and the work of art by so much a failure, it should not be possible to criticise separately these components of form. Analysis of Hamlet's character is not always as futile as it seems. Literature is thereby accepted as something more than juggling with words. In these criticisms we propose to accept film as more than juggling with celluloid.

I.N.

symbolism and film

special reference to Steel by Walter Ruttmann

Steel and machines are already the clichés of film. (Has this perhaps assisted in the poetic revolution against violets and nightingales) Seeing the name *Steel,* one feared that highly polished pistons would steam and throb towards a symbolism of I know not what. But Ruttmann's name was on the title, and the engines worked only slightly overtime—it is hard to say how much without having seen the full version of the film.

Good cross cutting within a scene is not uncommon. Here, a more difficult task, the whole gamut of fair and factory is played upon, interrelated. Symbolism and narrative are so fused that every scene contains a dual meaning. Which is true cinema. For symbols in film should be used either in purely abstract surroundings (the " new life " section of *A Simple Case*) or they should possess, outside their superimposed meaning, an intrinsic function in the film. Otherwise, as in the bird's beak and the man's nose in *Cottage on Dartmoor,* symbolism becomes simile, a literary device interrupting the continuity. In poetry simile calls to mind only relevant characteristic. In

EISENSTEIN !

As an English policeman in an unfinished film comedy by Hans Richter.

Dans le rôle d'un agent de police dans une comedie incomplete de Hans Richter.

Als ein englischer Polizist in einer unfertigen Film-Komoedie von Hans Richter.

cartoon note

OSWELL BLAKESTON

Mary Pickford once threatened that she intended to be the first living actress to appear in a cartoon fantasy: the early rumour had it that Mary would engage Disney to draw *Alice in Wonderland.*

[Knowing the Pickford's kindness in giving old-timers parts in her pictures, we might, had not early rumour been so lavishly incorrect, have looked forward to a come-back of that prehistoric bird which used to appear in Felix's screen saga: that nice bird had been off the screen too long.] From the publicity angle Mary's idea was a sound one, but it hardly would have brought anything new to the cinema—it would have been an experiment on the same plane of artistic endeavour as the dancer who mimes against painted curtains: on the other hand the notion of bringing cartoon and living performance onto the same plane of presentation, as distinct from the foreground and background visualisation, is something distinctly "of the cinema." Supposing: the left of the screen is a white panel on which delicate flowers are scratched (movement of growth and sleep walking); the flowers become a little surer in outline (as they are in the panel reproduced here); gradually they become blacker and blacker till they simplify into thick outline statements which suggest tension by the depth of the black lines shutting in the white; the right side of the screen now comes to life—out of the darkness a man is dancing; the camera moves in, and the black lines flow out from their panel and across the screen to the right (the tension of the surface of night thoughts has broken); one reality impinges on another. The rhythm of the dance is made, not by conventional cutting which is beginning to inhibit instead of stimulate as America's despairing return to the wipe-off clearly indicates, but by the conflict of the drawn lines with the gestures of the dancer's body: lines fall like rods or flow like water; lines are single or multiplied to mosaic: and the close up is obtained when the right hand of the screen is covered with a dark flower (DANGER OF DEATH) and the dancer's hand alone creeps from the calyz: the cartoon and man are both as real to one another and as unreal, and this is, possibly, not an idea for Mary Pickford.

film either the shot is too quick for the eye to receive any impression whatever (quick cutting necessitates several shots of identical subject), or the impression received is of an object complete in itself and having only a trivial connection with what has preceded it. Besides, an object, whether utilitarian or decorative, is an entity as soon as it is made visible. To continue with the previous example—there is first the barber's shop, the man talking, then the beak. The audience, though for an instant delighting in the humorous comparison, grows uncomfortable with a subconscious wondering—where is the cock in relation to the barber's shop. New surroundings have been established, but not their relation with the old.

Film symbolism is so little understood that its use in *Acciaio* is almost an innovation. Not unnaturally therefore Ruttmann's treatment is a little overpowering and unsubtle. But his symbolism, not only of image but of sound and even the spoken word, never forces the narrative. It was a stroke of genius in Pirandello to set this passionate story (over-bombastic for English taste) against a background of modern machinery. Ruttmann has taken full advantage of what, even in its verbal source, is film symbolism.

thunder over mexico

hollywood-cut version of shots planned for film by S. M. Eisenstein · photographed by Edward Tisse

The advance-guard, which has been prosecuting for months, is now answered: "The film was edited in accordance with Eisenstein's own scenario bearing his pencil annotations on the side." Well anyone with the slightest understanding of film aesthetic knows that a film cannot be cut to order in quite that way.

A hand drops bullets. A body slides across the screen. And other moments could be mentioned that bear the authentic Eisenstein touch. But the nuances of form that he would have created by cutting and recutting, they are pitifully lost in Hollywood misunderstanding of the medium. So often cutting is just rhythm; sometimes just continuity of movement or light or plot. Eisenstein combines them all in overtones which can be discovered only by a long process of trial and error.

Mr. Sinclair seems to forget that an artist is known by his works. Would you confuse Tolstoy with Zane Grey? That is about parallel to what Mr. Sinclair appears to expect. Perhaps he was counting upon audiences who would not have heard of Eisenstein, and critics who, too busy judging beauty contests, would hardly have bothered to visit his films. (Not that Eisenstein's types are not beautiful, but the admirers of platinum blondes would hardly appreciate them.)

Eisenstein went to Mexico and studied the people in reality, collected material to embody the reality in art. The Americans, who only bother to go sight-seeing, discovered in this material a few marketable because picturesque sombreros and ponchos. The reality remains just here and there to tantalise. The raped woman, for instance, is the artistic realisation of a type whose suppressed intellect seems concentrated in a passive power for suffering and love. In South and Central America her type is common, and her story should have been something more than an incident stupidly dis-

torted into the cause of a peasants' revolt. Her passiveness is the antithesis of Martha's positive vitality, and it seems probable that, unhampered by the moralising of *The General Line,* Eisenstein would have made of her something including but transcending a vehicle for propaganda.

Robbed of its meaning, Tissé's photography appears as technically perfect and as devoid of any real beauty as a Burne Jones tapestry. Mr. Sinclair tells us that even the clouds in this picture are dramatised. Now it is a fundamental of cinema that every component, whether animate or inanimate, should assume importance in the dramatic structure. To Mr. Sinclair this seems to have been a revelation, and one coming at a moment curiously inappropriate. For the clouds are but theatrical props that lose even spectacular meaning in a medley of fades, dissolves and superimpositions. To Hollywood, good photography means brilliant photography, whether the scene is a cottage or a palace. To artists it means light and shade and not an engineering feat. In *The General Line* Tissé photographed the slanting shadows, the laughter and squalour of northern peasants. Now he has caught the brilliant contrasts of the tropics. What Eisenstein would have created one can but guess. Creation it would certainly have been, for with him the sum of two film strips is not one plus one but a new thing. The three figures on the hill, even now lovelier because so quiet, than anything that has come from Hollywood, might really have assumed the gigantic proportions which the daily press would have us imagine.

If . . . . might . . . .

Of what use to speak of this as a film? One can only consider it as a series of photographs and the best possible proof that composition is not form until it is ruled by some intent.

ivan by Alexander Dovzhenko

Ivan is an epic poem conceived in terms of film. As such it is more beautiful than dynamic, rather a poet's dream of industrial construction than a socialist's. Dovzhenko conceives the human form sculpturally, he sets a young worker against a crane shaft, or a girl with a banner against a corn field, much as a sculptor might visualise his statue of a young communist. His peasants, becoming workers at the Dnieperstroi dam and there finding a new psychology, are always a little beyond life size, so that their struggles seems impersonal and symbolical while the Ukrainian fields and the slow flowing Dnieper river are more human than they. As one Soviet critic said " It is a negative glory ", beautiful, but too calm for a time of growth and regeneration.

M. S.

la maternelle by Leon Fraple

Another child study but less sentimentalised than *Poil de Carrotte*. There is one terse sequence where the child throws stones and then herself into the water, breaking the reflection of lovers. But why the whispering voice supplementing her self-contained acting? It is an easy device (in this case unnecessary) for directors whose film sense is inadequate. As though a poet were to call in a draughtsman to elucidate his song!

In *Poil de Carrotte* this idiosyncrasy occurred in sequences already wanting in film technique. In *La Maternelle* it spoils the one fine sequence in an honest production.

liebelei directed by Max Ophuls · photographed by Fred Lyssa

Often the denizens of " picture palaces " accuse art lovers of being inhuman. " Can't you ever go to the pictures for pleasure?" they say.

But how can one enjoy the mask-like profiles of the " star " system and photography designed to make everything look like the Ritz? *Liebelei,* though it is no film, is enjoyable because the photography is intimate, the actors alive. The tragic ending spoils what is otherwise pleasant and light.

26 commissars by Shangelaya

26 *Commissars* is the first important Georgian film and the last silent. Though the young regisseur, Shangelya, does not subdue his colossal mass of material,—the flooding of the Baku oil fields by the intervening British Army in 1919, the fluctuating political feeling of the oil workers and the shooting of the 26 Communist Commissars—to complete order, he does succeed in creating a monumental sequence of cinema for at least a quarter of an hour.

The shooting of the 26 Commissars in the sand dunes of Georgia leaves a terrific impression,—the hunting down of so many animals. Hunter and hunted plod with slow awful steps through the shifting sand, tracked by a long distant shot. The marshalling of the Commissars into a herd is done with slow precision, and their massacre, one by one until only the leader remains to stumble on through the sand, moves in a slow deliberate tempo, building up an appalling sense of tension. " Where is he going?" the English ask " To Baku?" and they riddle him with bullets until he falls upon the top of the hillock. Then a quick cut,—to a meeting of the Baku oil workers where there appears a new leader speaking,—carrying on.

M. S.

lot in sodom by James S. Watson and Melville Webber

Produced by two amateurs, Dr. James S. Watson and Melville Webber producers of *The Fall of the House of Usher,* depicts the Bible story with great beauty and subtle technique superior to anything they have done and in many ways surpassing the best achievements of the professional screen. Its chief distinction is the use of the " Dissolve " harmonizing mobile forms one into the other, akin to the " Lap-Dissolve " but employing a method still unexplained. It is the first amateur sound on film (35 mm.) and because of its excellence has been accepted by theatres for general distribution with an original music score by Louis Siegel.

Leonard Hacker.

surburbia (okraina) by Boris Barnet · sound-music by Vassilenko

The greatest moments of this film come with the gradual breaking down of human endurance, due to the strain of war—uncertainty.

The action develops in a small provincial village, where we follow the reactions of the war on the local population. Gradually latent passions come to the surface, bursting into a series of crises, the key becoming neurosis, actions happening through torn nerves . . . .all this side of the destructive powers of war is magnificently handled by Barnet, who has a deep understanding of real human values—similar to Trivas. Barnet would be comparable to Pabst, except for his lack of polish, which is perhaps just why his robust details fit so perfectly into the general simplicity, fecundity and virility of the film's texture.

A number of advanced conceptions in the use of sound, although technically weak, strengthen an already excellently planned script ; showing clearly how the Soviet directors appreciate the potentialities of sound. Two amusing sound metaphors are worth noting: A horse sighing " oh my God " . . . . and an engine bursting forth steam to " hurrah, hurrah!"

Okraina is an important film, which London must see. It is the Soviet's latest contribution towards world peace, and it ranks with such films as NIEMANDSLAND, LES CROIX DE BOIS and WESTFRONT 1918.

H. L.

film category

(in which, each quarter, we will list any films which may have occasional moments of good cinema, either in cutting, photography, acting, etc.)

YOU MADE ME LOVE YOU—musical comedy—lovely beginning with traffic sequence, perfect combination of action and sound—and a good use of angles at the end—otherwise the usual being *very* usual. B.V.B.

DUCK SOUP—new 4 Marx brothers—disappointing return to cheap slapstick and, far worse, ' snappy dialogue '—but real film-comedy in the mirror sequence which is too long, and one or two others moments. B.V.B.

LE PETIT ROI—one well cut sequence of the revolutionists—good photography—somewhat less sentimentalised than POIL DE CARROTTE, but oh, THE WIPES! (Why does not Duvivier try documentary? He can be excellent when he is not telling a story.) I.N.

THE INVISIBLE MAN—superb faking, and just a little real visual thrill, when the invisible man first becomes invisible—the most stupid use of sound (talk) possible—a technical not an aesthetic success.

MAGIC CARPET OF MOVIETONE SERIES (Around the Acropolis, Tokio, Tunisia, etc.) —some very lovely, but rather superficial, pictorial matter (DARK RICH SKY, ALMOST BLACK : IN THE FOREGROUND, GLEAMING WHITE BUILDINGS). But over-correction of this sort should be justified—some time ago Movietone presented BERLIN MEDLEY. It combined all the photographic clarity of the ordinary series but was, besides, beautifully cut. The cutting (?) in the ordinary ones is lamentable. B.V.B.

SANTA'S WORKSHOP, NOAH'S ARK, MICKEY'S NIGHTMARE, YE OLDEN DAYS, PUPPY LOVE, etc. (" are you a Walt Disney "—Sunday Newspaper Poster).

Blatant colour in the Silly Symphonies and talk in the Mickey Mouse series are trying to spoil these feasts of cinematic rhythm. People laugh because of the ' gags '. But it is subconsciously the real filmicness, the rhythm, which makes them so pleasant to watch. Santa's Workshop has moments of mass movement, Noah's Ark relies more on ' gags ', Puppy Love is poor, because it's a ' talkie ', but Ye Olden Days is a perfect thing with

continued on page 27

On the opposite page are two photos from a little known book by Francis Bruguiere and Oswell Blakeston:* this book was a study, as far as the text was concerned, in understatement, while the photos supplied the dramatic overtones: the method is borrowed from the movies where the drama has often been provided by the photography, and the story has been merely conventional representation which is popularly called " photographic."

* *Few Are Chosen,* published by the Scholartis Press: the book is out of print at the publishers, but it can still be obtained from some bookshops including Charles Lahr, 68 Red Lion Street, London, W.C.1.

Lightstudy by Francis Bruguière.
Etude de Lumière de Francis Bruguière.
Lichtstudie von Francis Bruguière.

Lightstudy by Francis Bruguière.
Etude de Lumière de Francis Bruguière.
Lichtstudie von Francis Bruguière.

lovely throbbing rhythm (notice the scenes before the charge, to the tune " you gotta have music "). If colour is to be used in cartoons it must be manipulated to suit the rest. Not people with red faces because in reality they may happen to have them. Some of the colour in Noah's Ark, for example, is painful because it is far removed from the action and movement of the film proper. B.V.B.

I'M NO ANGEL—the Mae West bunkum you either hate or love—whatever it is, it isn't " sophisticated filth " as some (who probably enjoy it most) have called it—I'm No Angel is notable for an example of excellent cinema —the beginning where the cutting is perfect—and for another of ghastly cinema—where Mae West puts her head into a lion's mouth, with cutting and angles giving no effect or dramatism to the subject-matter.

S.O.S. ICEBERG—try and ignore the story, if it can be forgotten—remember some of the dark skies and white snows, scenes or icebergs and glaciers, and some good aerial shots.

THE PARAMOUNT SHORTS—in particular the Mack Sennett Comedies are often worth attention. Some of the later Mack Sennett Comedies have been very disappointing—relying on dialogue instead of pictures—but still some of them contain good film comedy material and, occasionally, worthwhile cutting.

the ' dissolve '

In every film whether the device is used or not the Dissolve always takes place in the mind of the spectator, who by his own powers of mental alchemy, must transmute the images presented to him into intelligent patterns and concepts. As a visual device it has been used only incidentally, in shifting conveniently from a scene, set or sequence to another, necessary to plot development sprung from the novel and stage, or to depict characters' thoughts. In a recent book for the amateur the writer has used the " Perpetual Dissolve " as a basis for the establishing of visual and musical rhythm developing from within the content of the scenes rather than by an artificial intensity of accumulated pieces in editing which is usually the case with straight cutting. This departure met with hostile criticism in one instance due to the misconception that the Dissolve must be isolated lest it destroy the thought, whereas it should be the means by which the thought develops. One would not recommend this method for every film, but the realization that the Dissolve is the basis of continuity preserves for the cinema its unique power in presenting forms, thoughts and events in evolution, relation and transition. We may duplicate cutting by arranging stills in an album, but the growth of thought through evolving physical forms belongs to the screen alone.

The Dissolve is a physio-chemical device where the Cut is but physical. It is only recently that the laws of chemistry and those of physics have been united in a single science with the realization that all life is both physical and chemical in constant interaction. The Dissolve naturally manifests this unity and thus becomes the true basis of the cinema with the cut and other devices as incidental. By its means we also infer mental alchemy or transmutation by which conflicts and prejudices may be ' melted out ' or " Dissolved " quietly and painlessly into higher and deeper realizations of consciousness and unity.

Leonard Hacker.

manifesto (I)

dialogue on SOUND

●

its proper use in film

BASIL WRIGHT—B. VIVIAN BRAUN

Wright: First we must realise that films have always been sound-films, even in the silent days. The bigger the orchestra the better the film appeared.

Vivian Braun: Quite. And now that talk has been made possible, do you consider it as good an adjunct as music?

W.: No, because a good 'talkie' is a stage-play possibly improved by the mechanical advantages of the camera, e.g. pans, close-ups, cutting, etc.

V.B.: You mean that 'talkies' are not films?

W: 'Talkies' are technically film, but cinematically they are not.

V.B.: Then the only thing to do is to separate 'talkies' and sound-films into different categories from the start.

W.: Yes, and so we need not discuss 'talkies' any further, let's go on to soundfilm proper. To begin with, what do the aesthetes say about sound-film?

V.B.: A great deal. Firstly they crack up contrapuntal sound and sound imagery as grand artistic effects.

I believe this was originally due to a typical aesthetic reaction when the talking film first came; they refused to recognise them, quite rightly, and then when a year had passed and talking films had not wilted under their disaproval they went to the other extreme.

W.: Yes, I remember the hanging scene in "The Virginian" came in for a lot of praise.

V.B.: Still the aesthetes (I am never quite clear as to who these folk are) have a good deal on their side.

W.: Of course they have; most of the opinions are good solid cinema theory, but the difficulty is that they are unaware of this. It doesn't harm the theory, but it viciates the practice.

V.B.: Well perhaps we had better analyse the advantages of sound and in particular the advantages of sound imagery, if any, and counterpoint.

W.: But we must not forget that the film is visual, so much so that the perfect film should be satisfactory from every point of view without sound and, therefore, shown in complete silence.

V.B.: BUT THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE PERFECT FILM COULD NOT BE SUPER-PERFECTED BY THE USE OF SOUND AS AN ADJUNCT.

W.: The use of sound imagistically, the cross-cutting of sound and visuals (counterpoint) can undoubtedly be effective, but this does not mean to say that good visuals could not get the same effect more legitimately—in fact I begin to wonder if sound has any advantage at all.

V.B.: Yes it has. It can and does undoubtedly intensify the effect of visuals. But it does not necessarily create that effect. The wrong sound (so powerful is sound) can kill the image.

W: Yes, and I happen to have seen my pet sequence killed stone dead by the addition of Bach's music which happens to be better than any film yet made. It killed my visuals because it was too powerful.

V.B.: Which reminds us that one of the most potent arts is sound.

W.: What do we mean by sound in connection with film?

V.B.: Before you start your film you have available every sound in the world from the lark's song to Mae West's voice, to the Jupiter symphony to the internal combustion engine.

W.: And the human voice is no greater in value than any other sound.

V.B.: When synchronising your film you select, from all the sounds, those you require.

If you put natural sound corresponding to visual image, and in particular concentrate on the human voice, you make a 'talkie'.

W.: If you put any natural sound which doesn't correspond with the visual action, you make a dull highbrow film!

V.B.: If you make a good visual film which is self-contained without any sound, you will find that the only sound which will really intensify your visuals is abstract sound.

W.: Music is abstract.

V.B.: But music confines itself, very rightly, to noises produced by a limited number of special instruments. You are at liberty to orchestrate any sound in the world.

W.: Once orchestrated they will become as abstract as music. Orchestrated abstract sound is the true accompliment to film.

It can intensify the value of, say, an aeroplane in flight in a way which natural aeroplane sound could not achieve—

V.B.: Because natural sound is uncontrolled. No art is uncontrolled. Abstract sound is completely controlled by the artist, in this case the director of the film.

The director must create his sound as well as his visuals, and as he cannot create natural sound he must orchestrate it for his own purpose.

W.: When he can do this as well as Cezanne orchestrated nature onto canvas, the first real film will have been made.

reply to letter by h. p. j. marshall★

The direct mixing of politics and art is fatal. Politics is one thing, art another. But this is not to pretend that art is not influenced (BUT NOT DICTATED BY) current affairs and goings-on. But to Marshall only the thing that is said matters. How it is said matters not. But the Soviet cinema, that terrific, dynamic and (at its best) aesthetically superb affair is a great cinema not merely because it glorifies a political issue, but because it gives to its subject matter FORM. CINEMATIC FORM. If Eisenstein were a Fascist his films would be just as magnificent as are his present (communist) ones.

It is the one thing the American cinema lacks—this application of form. Cinema—different speeds of cutting, camera angles, tones of photography, panning, trolleying, SOUND, and all the other components of film are used without thought and without reason.

Marshall says " so at the rock-bottom we come to *purpose*— one must choose that and everything follows." Therefore a stage play-on-celluloid which propagates the clearance of slums is, of necessity, a great film? (and an aesthetic work—since we are discussing film, an art form).

film art is not, and never will be, a political paper so we will not discuss the advantages or disadvantages of communism, but Marshall's letter should have been labelled " The underlying purpose and conception of the Soviet film".

Film can be the cinematic presentation of a certain theme. That theme may be communist, fascist or (and heaven knows how often it is) capitalist. The political trend of the film does not interfere with its merits or demerits, although we would be the last to deny its significance in its relation to everyday life. But is a painting which serves as propaganda for an " anti-litter " campaign necessarily greater than one which depicts, say, a dockyard scene, because the former happens to have a deliberate social value?

The American film (hardly art, I know) is, and this is quite obvious, the outcome of a social system *in its meaning,* but if America suddenly became a communist country, would every Hollywood film automatically become a great work of cinema just because the whole meaning behind the films would be changed?

B. Vivian Braun.

* *film art* 2, Winter 1933.

In a recent letter H. P. J. Marshall sends some interesting notes:

Alexandrov has made a soundfilm ' Jazz-Comedy '.

Tissé has gone with an expedition through the Kara-Kum desert on Soviet autos.

Marshall himself is working, with a new young regisseur as assistant, making Maupassant's *Boule de Suif.*

" Telephone Workers "—documentary film by Stuart Legg. Production : Grierson.

" Opérateurs des téléphones "—film documentaire de Stuart Legg. Production : Grierson.

" Telefon Arbeiter ", dokumentarischer Film von Stuart Legg. Produktion : Grierson.

" Suburbia " ; a new film by Boris Barnet which has been showing in Paris. It is reviewed in this number.

" Le Ban Lieu " ; un nouveau film de Boris Barnet qu'on a vu à Paris. On a parlé dans ce numéro.

" Grenzland " ; ein neuer Film von Boris Barnet der kuerzlich in Paris gespielt wurde. Er ist in diesem Hefte kritisiert.

" The Girl From Maxims ". London Film Production by Alexanda Corda.

" La Jeune Fille de Maxims ". London Film Production by Alexanda Corda.

" Das Mädchen vom Maxims ". London Film Production by Alexanda Corda.

BOOK REVIEW :

magazine note

The significance of the aesthetic film is becoming very evidently realised by the better of America's independent magazines (e.g. Windsor Quarterly, Trend, A Year Magazine, Contempo, etc., etc.)

In a ' comment ' in the Winter issue of The Windsor Quarterly, Frederick B. Maxham, the editor, says:

" That the cinema may be an art form is generally accepted, but only in isolated instances are producers and their associates attempting to develop films with more than a box-office appeal, or groups of spectators offering the necessary encouragement by means of patronage to these producers ".

Film Technique by Pudovkin. (Geo. Newnes Ltd. 3/6)

A revised edition, including notes on sound, of Pudovkin's well-known book. The first words being " The foundation of film art is *editing* " Excellent start!

The book as a whole is too incomplete—too like a note-book. Nevertheless it remains one of *the* film books, and should be read by all serious cinemagoers.

Filmcraft by Adrian Brunel (Geo. Newnes Ltd. 3/6).

Mr. Brunel says there are to be two types of films. National and international (i.e. ' talkie ' and sound film). Only too true, but can't Mr. Brunel make his films of the latter type? For an English commercial director to realise that there are two types of film is something, so why not go one step further?

Filmcraft is not very different from the usual rather trite books " mainly for amateurs " but the summary at the end is a good and useful idea. B.V.B.

Art Now by Herbert Read (Faber & Faber, 12/6)

Herbert Read's knowledge of aesthetics is not bounded by one time or one medium. He knows the history and has acute understanding of the aesthetic principles of all visual arts and of poetry.

Writing of modern visual art he can still generalise thus:

" The artist makes thought visible, without the intermediary of verbal concepts."

" Art is the expression through the senses of states of intuition, perception or emotion, peculiar to the individual."

Thus, finding the basis of modern art in the basis of all, he judges it not in isolation but as a logical sequence in a growing tradition. A book to be read by those interested in any or every art. I. N.

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the alternate shot for the censor

methods of the commercial studio

All the high-hat talk of Eisenstein having used thirty-five miles of film for shooting *Que Viva Mexico*! brings to mind another aspect of film wastage—this time in the ordinary commercial studios.

THE ALTERNATE SHOT FOR THE CENSOR.

When the sex-minded director smuggly shoots two or three scenes in different degrees of ' reality ', hoping above hopes that the ' really hot one ' will escape the censor's extra scrutiny. (I never knew of this till I watched the making of some God-forsaken opus at Elstree. Nearly half the shots in a certain scene had to be taken twice in case the censor had any ' objections ').

comment

On Wednesday afternoon, July 19th, 1933, Harry Alan Potamkin died. He was considered by many as the greatest film critic that has ever lived, and was known widely for his brilliant articles and criticisms, particularly his series on Eisenstien, Pudovkin, Pabst and Clair in the Hound and Horn. His writings were never biased by any political or other thought, whatsoever, and he was recognised for his brilliance by the most staunch bourgeois and the most revolutionary communists. Everything he ever wrote was undermined by *understanding*. Not merely understanding for the art with which he dealt but an understanding of human emotions and human nature. His death came as a very sudden shock to his friends and thousands of enthusiastic readers. Elizabeth Potamkin, his widow, has donated his valuable film library to the students of the Moscow Institute of Cinema.

* * * *

AN APPEAL TO INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS has been issued by the XIX Biennale D'Arts who wish to consider independent films for exhibition in the August 1934 exhibition for the art of cinematography which will take place in Venice. All the independent producers who might have, in the course of the next few months, some films available for projection before the international public of the Venice Exhibition, are requested to send to the secretary of the committee in Rome a brief description, and if possible some photos, of the subjects of the films they may wish to present. Letters etc., should be addressed to Attilio Fontana, Secretary for the exhibition, I.I.E.C., Via Lazzaro, Spallianzanila, Rome.

* * * *

film production. The American avant-garde seems busy. A good sign. Lewis Jacobs, the well-known American critic who will be sending us notes and photos soon, has already made two short films Mobile Composition and Commercial Medley. He has also just completed As I Walk a two-reel documentary of a working-class section of New York. Emphasis is laid on the poverty and social misery of the district. (The general trend in the new American independent films is to show the disgusting social conditions which exist in the large and small cities of the U.S.A.). Lot in Sodom, by Watson and Webber, directors of the brilliant Fall of the House of Usher (the 16 mm. version), is noticed in our Film Review section. Ralph Steiner (who made H20) is now mounting Cafe Universal ; an exposition of the horror and futility of war. Black Dawn is a three-reel story of a group of persons on a farm, by Jo Berne. It is a soundfilm with music by Cameron Macpherson. With these, and several others completed or in production, there is a definite sign of a re-awakening in the American advance-guard cinema.

* * * *

Several of those on *film art* are making and preparing experimental productions, at present on substandard. Emphemeral is the title of a film to be started shortly by Irene Nicholson. It is an abstract in which simultaneously as light, at the beginning of day, rises and falls, the four seasons also pass. Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter last a day and are gone as night falls. Light creeping over a line of hills is followed by light creeping over a woman's body, over wavy hair, over rippling water . . . .

* * * *

Exhilaration, B. Vivian Braun's abstract which " attempts to express in visual symbols a series of emotions, beginning with calmness and placitude and culminating in excitement, joy, vivacity—exhilaration " has been periodically held up through lack of time and because of bad weather. Now it is almost completed. Several other films are being planned by Vivian Braun including a filmpoem of body and water.

* * * *

The Forum Cinema, Villiers Street, London, have been doing their best to show 'unique films' on Sunday evenings. Other than the accursed censorship the main difficulty is the fact that the lease of so many films has run out, and consequently they cannot be shown publicly: General Line, War is Hell, Sous Les toits de Paris, A nous la Liberte, Cottage on Dartmoor, Contact (full version), Alone, Waxworks, Berlin, Brumes D'Automne, Man with the Movie Camera, and a good few other films have

already been shown. But the management are finding it increasingly difficult to find really good films. And it is only to be hoped that they may be allowed a permit to form a society for Sunday shows of old and new examples of cinema art.

* * * *

The widespread interest in the cinema as art is shown by the fact that New Zealand has several film societies ; the principal one being the Wellington Film Society. An extremely progressive body. They have just been prosecuted for showing the Road to Life after it had been banned, but this has not apparently damped any of their enthusiasm, and they are going ahead arranging further shows.

* * * *

The ' little ' cinema movement is rapidly advancing. And now there is the Everyman Cinema, Hampstead, London. Under the capable direction of J. S. Fairfax-Jones, this cinema is presenting repertory film shows, and the better English and American films. Perhaps the most important feature is the fact that short films are considered and chosen just as carefully as the main picture. As a cinema, the Everyman is excellent. With perfect projection, and that pleasant absence of ' Gothic ' arches, and vile carpets that sink as you walk over them. Another feature is a stall where the best film books and literature are on sale.

* * * *

The Academy Cinema, London, announces the resignation of Erik Hakim as managing director. The shows will still be organised by Miss Elsie Cohen, who was the first to originate the idea of Continental film presentations. Their most notable late presentation was La Maternelle and forthcoming films include Brieux's La Robe Rouge and a new Reiniger silhouette film.

* * * *

On the occasion of the premiere presentation of Thunder Over Mexico in New York, Lincoln Kirkstein, editor of the Hound and Horn and an admirer of Eisenstein, asked if he would be permitted to ask a question relating to this Sinclair edition. Hardly had he risen to speak when some hired ' toughs ' tried to throw him out. This typifies the spirit of the promoter's of Thunder Over Mexico.

the cinema to-day

Film trade advertisement:
" PAUL MUNI
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Another trade ad.:
BOY OH-BOY!
just look at JIMMY CAGNEY HOT-CHA! Ain't he swell—The " LADY KILLER-" and DOES HE BURN UP HIS FLAMES? SEE HIM AROUND WITH MAE CLARK What a man!

An interesting point.
Some years ago *Ariane* a German film was banned by the British Film Censors. It dealt with the love affair of a schoolgirl. In a new American film 8 *Girls in a Boat* a schoolgirl has some love-affairs, a baby (or several, we forget) and so on. *Ariane* has now been passed by the censor. The interesting (?) point is why the censor banned *Ariane* (a more or less sincere effort) and passed 8 *Girls in a Boat.*

Advertisement for film *Behold We Live*:
The Ages roared " Thou Shalt Not "
But nature whispered " Love while you May."
Local paper announcement:
SPECIAL SUNDAY—By Request—Ernst Lubitch in " The Love Parade "
with Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald.

* * * *

Dialogue from American film of farm life:
" Cheer-up, Little Mother, remember that love is as sweet and kind as the larks that sing in the morning, and as cold and hard as the bats that flutter at night '.

* * * *

Prominent film critic overheard at a first-night:
" What we've got to do to British films is to put more guts into our men, and take more clothes off our women ".

* * * *

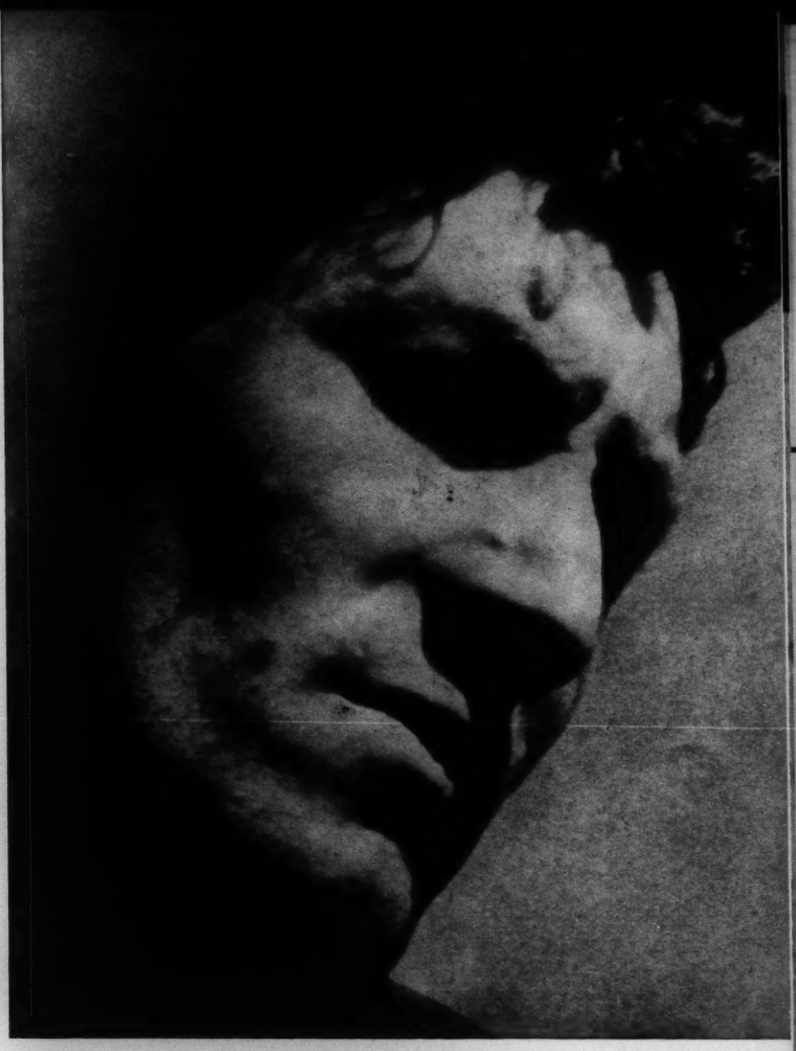
John Grierson in New Britain (Jan. 10 1934):
" What is wrong with Upton Sinclair might make an even better theme for criticism than the film, for he used to be better than that. Alas, you have a spectacle of the great Upton wheedling your sympathy and your pennies for a bastard article he should be kicked in the slats for. If you back an artist you have to go through with him even if he is difficult . . . If we are to have films at all that principle must be upheld, and if the money grabbing factor makes it impossible let us have no slobbery about " exact accord with the senario ", no lies (when it comes to the box-office) that it is a genuine article, and no malicious hints about the wastage involved in shooting thirty-five miles of film ". This excellent " attack " by Grierson was well supported by an article in The New Statesman and Nation of January 20th, 1934, in which the whole truth of Sinclair's method was exposed.

In the New Statesman article the whole affair is summed up thus:

' Now, there was once a man sued by his neighbour on the grounds that he had returned a borrowed teapot less the spout. The man, whose name was Mr. A, pleaded, first, that he had never borrowed the teapot; second, that if he had borrowed it, the spout was missing when he borrowed it; third, that if it had had a spout, the spout was still on when he returned it. Mr. Sinclair is like Mr. A. The logic of his defence is as follows: first, the picture is grand; second if it isn't grand, anyway it was cut according to Eisenstein's ideas; third, if it wasn't cut according to his ideas, it couldn't have been anyway, because he and the picture couldn't be got together; fourth, even if he and the picture could have been got together, it wouldn't have been any use, because Eisenstein is extravagant and impractical and shot thirty-five miles of film . . . .'

* * * *

We welcome suitable quotations for this section, and particularly request that they be sent as soon as obtained.



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" L'homme d'Aran de Robert Flaherty.
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